1: Nimuendaju E-5 (1929-1936) 1946 SOS Timbira SOS

Hygiene

Unless subject to taboos, both sexes bathe at least once a day, the younger people twice or three times. If all the residents are assembled during the vų'tę' period, the younger generation take their first bath jointly before sunrise as soon as the youths' and maidens' dance in the plaza abruptly comes to a stop. At that moment all dash toward the brook, including the girls, who have quickly fetched their gourd bottles. Men and women of mature age are also in the habit of joining, but those really old rarely come, if at all. The girls go directly upstream, take up a position counter to the current, and fill their vessels, everyone laughing and splashing about. At this early hour the air is piercing cold on the steppe, and precisely before sunrise a gust of wind is likely to make the bathers shiver as they get out of their bath. In order to get warm everybody rushes up the slope toward the village. But the members of whatever festive organizations happen to be functioning assemble halfway to the settlement around fires, for which they have already brought along dry palm grass. Only after having warmed themselves they run shouting, each society separately, into the village, where each occupies its appropriate site in the plaza.

During the day they generally bathe again, performing their ablutions by rubbing themselves with their hands or with leaves. After nightfall they avoid entering the water. The hair, as noted, is washed by rubbing it between the palms. Notwithstanding their efforts the skin rarely appears wholly clean, for it usually retains remnants of old body paint, feathers glued on, and the like—the sort of things regarded as dirt by civilized people. Babies at the breast are the cleanest part of the population, for they are washed without delay as soon as they are dirty.

The oral cavity is cleansed with the index and middle fingers and rinsed with sand. They never clean their fingernails.

When at most three years old the Rąmkõ'kamekra boys and girls know how to swim and dive. I observed that the Krahõ', Kre'pų'mkateye, and the Timbira of Araparytína were all good swimmers, and the same has been reported of the Põrekamekra.[39] On the other hand, I had a different impression of the Krĩkati, who do not live along running watercourses and of whom I suspect at least some are unable to swim. At all events they manifested a striking repugnance to deep water, as I noted repeatedly when they accompanied me from their village to Porto Franco on the Tocantins. At the Ribeirão da Aldea, whose wooded bank was somewhat more than knee-deep under water, while in midstream the water of the brook did not extend beyond my saddle, these Indians cut off sticks to take soundings ahead of them, and I had long reached the opposite bank when I still heard them splashing behind me and excitedly shouting at one another. They talked of the Ribeirão dos Arraias, which is 20 m. wide and 1½ deep, as though it were an insurmountable obstacle; and the successful crossing took an eternity, for each of the women had to be led across by two men. Still more amusing was the passage of the shallow, but swift streamlet known as Lageado in a canoe belonging to a Neobrazilian. At first no one ventured to step into it, and when the first hero hesitantly and diffidently succumbed to my mockery, his wife kept singing in a booming voice on the bank till she saw him safely on land.

The dwellings are in general tolerably cleanly. Every self-respecting woman will sweep her house and the space before it at least once a day—even several times if the offals after a meal require it. The brooms are made of the inflorescence of the assahy (*Euterpe* sp.) or the bacaba palm (*Oenocarpus* sp.), or a bundle of mallow

[39] Pohl, Reise, 2:200 f.

1: Nimuendajú E-5 (1929-1936) 1946 SOS Timbira SOS
Ge 515

T 356 412

twigs tied together. Garbage is accumulated on the firefan or an old mat and carried to the border of the steppe, to the rear of the house. However, there are women who are not particular about a little dirt more or less, and who will leave the rinds of fruits and gnawed bones lying about all day long.

T 356 751

The domestic vermin include crickets, cockroaches, small ants, and jiggers. The first two are simply put up with. As for ant nests, the Indians try to destroy them with hot water; and as soon as they become aware of jiggers, they periodically pour water on the floor, which they stamp on till it grows firm. Those which have penetrated the skin are removed with a bone needle—for which at present an iron one may be substituted.

T 264 515

All utensils are rather dirty, for it never occurs to them to clean objects before storage. The clothing that is obligatory on visits to Barra do Corda is subsequently stowed away for one's own or another's future use without attention to the accumulated dirt and perspiration. Dishes are never washed after use, though this is done before again using them. Storage bags and sleeping mats are often filthy, though the latter are washed when the dirt grows too offensive.

T 514

The Indians go to stool in the steppe or in the mallow bushes to the rear of their houses, at an adequate distance. They clean themselves with kerneled maize cobs or with two little sticks broken off on the way. The feces of infants in the house or on the space before it are at once strewn with sand and removed.

T [828]

The Canella are very sensitive as to evil smells, though they do not always perceive the same things as stench as civilized people. As noted, they regard as pleasant the odor of urucú, from which Neobrazilians recoil, and they are strangely indifferent to the odor of the skunk (*Mephitis suffocans*), which to my nostrils is the most horrible to be found in the Timbira country. However, excrements and putrefying matter are intolerable to them and are removed posthaste.

T 827 516

Breaking wind is considered indecorous indoors, but rather a pleasure on the steppe or in the plaza among the younger generation. Indeed, young girls sometimes vie with one another in this respect and try to enhance the effect by hitting their own buttocks with their clenched fists. However, this happens only among themselves, never in the presence of older people.

G T 177 241 114

Farming

It is erroneous to picture the Gê generically as hunters and gatherers, with at best an occasional group adopting a little cultivation under Tupí influence.[155] Actually, not a single Akwẽ or Timbira-Kayapó tribe failed to farm; and as to the latter, at least, I am convinced that they learnt nothing from the Tupí about agriculture. Old travelers sometimes decree that such and such a tribe lived "only by hunting" or even "by robbery only." Thus, Saint-Adolphe alleges that the Apinayé had grown accustomed to a vegetable diet only through the plantations made by the military colony of São João de Araguaya (founded in 1797). He overlooked the passage in which Villa Real—four years prior to the establishment of that colony—urged a treaty of peace with the Apinayé on the ground of their cultivating manioc on a large scale.[156]

T 241 177 114

Following Ribeiro and Pohl, Snethlage states that the Timbira when first in contact with civilization already practiced a well-defined system of tillage and rightly surmises that the four species listed by Ribeiro do not exhaust the number of their crops. At present the Rąmkõ'kamekra plant the following species, which shall be

[155] For a typical expression of this view see Schmidt, Kulturkreise und Kulturschichten in Südamerika, 1023.

[156] Viagem, 409.

1: Nimuendajú E-5 (1929-1936) 1946 SOS Timbira SOS
Ge SLS

Notwithstanding Ribeiro's explicit assertion that the Krahô' of 1816 did not know how to raise or treat cotton, it seems to me to have been native to all Northwestern and Central Gê before the advent of civilization. In the first place, cotton is employed in a variety of ways—in wholly aboriginal forms of industry as well as in ceremonial, notably in the boys' initiation festival. A second argument is the technique of plaiting cotton carrying slings for children, though it must be admitted that according to Ribeiro[160] their material was burity bast. Third, there is the form of the spindle, deviating from the neighboring Neobrazilian and Guajajára parallels (pl. 18, *a*); finally, all the Northwestern tribes share the same word for cotton.

Ethnographically, however, the kupá is the most important of Timbira cultivated species. This creeper (*Cissus* sp.) has starchy tendrils, which attain the thickness of an inch and are baked in earth ovens. It does not occur wild; is restricted, so far as my information goes, to the Eastern and Western Timbira and the Šerénte, all of them Gê tribes; and is pronouncedly xerophil. Accordingly, it is probably a very old cultivated species peculiar to these tribes, which could not have borrowed it from either Neobrazilians or any of their present Indian neighbors.

As for tobacco, my corresponding comment on it among the Apinayé also holds for the Eastern Timbira. Apparently they were *acquainted* with it before the coming of civilization, but even nowadays they do not plant it, the timid attempts of this or that Rąmkõ'kamekra having invariably failed to yield satisfactory results. I did not observe a single case of its magical or ceremonial use among these people. Both sexes, however, are passionate smokers and constantly beg for tobacco. They smoke cigarettes of maize husks or tauary bast; a few also use little clay pipe bowls bent at an angle, with bamboo stems (kačím; Portuguese, caximbo). The chief Kukrãčą' manufactures very pretty and neatly finished specimens, partly for sale to Neobrazilians, among whom the same form is in vogue.

Urucú and pepper shrubs, as well as sporadic *Crescentia*, mango, lemon or orange trees, are planted beside or behind dwellings, the young plants being guarded against roving pigs and fowls by little fences of vertically set sticks or by circumscribed quadrangles made of former racing logs.

The true plantations (pl. 5, *a*) are situated in the narrow *galeria* forests by the brooks. Since annually new clearings are necessary, the distance of the plots from the village steadily increases. When the transportation of the crops becomes altogether too cumbersome, the Indians are obliged to move their village near the new plots. Thus, the Rąmkõ'kamekra migrate with fair regularity about every ten years from the Ribeirão Santo Estevão to the Ribeirão dos Bois. While they are stationed by one of the two creeks for from ten to twenty years, the timber of the other grows again sufficiently to permit the creation of new plots.

Each individual family has its plantation, owned by the woman. No single man owns a plot, but many an unmarried woman claims one and gets her kinsmen to make the requisite clearings, this being an exclusively masculine task. For the last hundred years only iron axes have been in use, different brands being very well distinguished by the natives, who rightly prefer the North American "Collins" blades. No one nowadays is able to haft such stone blades as are still occasionally found. The method of felling timber with iron tools coincides with Neobrazilian practice. Though not every Indian has a good ax suitable for the purpose, he may borrow a relative's.

The several plots belonging to the married woman of an extended family usually, but not always, adjoin one another. At times one individual family may simul-

[160] Memoria, § 12.

241 and rice. An Indian who takes no precautions against these birds is sure to lose his entire yield, irrespective of the amount planted. The only antidote is to have a guardian stationed in the plots throughout the daytime during the season so that he may at once repel the intruders. This is achieved by shouts or a variety of [411] missiles—stones, palm nuts, and clay balls hurled with the hand, with slings (hûkaipẽ'rẽa), or with a pellet bow.

223 Among the Rąmkõ'kamekra and Krahõ' I have seen boys setting snares for parrots. To a hoop about 20 cm. in diameter and spanned by a network of cords they attach a dozen nooses of tucum fiber (Rąmkõ'kamekra) or, among the Krahõ', of horsehair. After placing some rice ears or similar lures below these snares, they tie the hoop in horizontal position to a wooden fork, which in turn is fastened to the top of as long a bamboo pole as possible. The entire contraption, which is visible from a considerable distance, is erected in the plantation, and as soon as the parrots pounce upon the rice ears their feet are caught in the nooses (pl. 17, *a*, *b*).

252 White neighbors are wont to mock at Rąmkõ'kamekra farmers, alleging that
177 they raise nothing or at least nothing worth while and that they subsist by theft and begging. Few take the trouble even to look at the Indian plantations. Yet toward the close of 1930 these scoffers were obliged willy-nilly to acknowledge publicly that the Indians had planted considerable crops. At that time part of

Fig. 5. Digging stick. 1/10 nat. size.

Maranhão suffered from a famine, for the manioc crop had failed over a wide area so that the generally indispensable flour made from this plant was lacking. In Barra do Corda the scarcity forced the local officials to ration the sale of what little was to be had. At the peak of this plight the Rąmkõ'kamekra suddenly appeared with several horseloads of manioc flour and saved the townsmen since by an odd chance they alone had saved their yield. In the meantime, not only the half-starved Guajajára from beyond the Rio Corda had billeted themselves on the residents of Ponto, but even the Neobrazilians came to offer the Rąmkõ'kamekra their labor in return for manioc. When I reached Barra do Corda in 1931 and inquired in a shop whether good flour was to be had, the owner answered, "Very good flour, indeed; it's from the aldea Ponto!" Yet in this town many "whites" had declared categorically that they would never eat anything prepared by "these
252 nauseating beasts" (*esses bichos nojentos*). Many Indians are deterred from ampler
433 production of manioc flour for sale only by the lack of means of transport, for
483 hauling a flour sack on one's back over a distance of seventy-eight kilometers is
177 something of a hardship even for a Timbira educated as a log racer.

Rąmkõ'kamekra economic life was most significantly affected during the last twenty years by the Indians' turning to intensive preparation of manioc flour and to rice cultivation. At present these originally alien articles of food are about to gain ascendancy both in the kitchen and, next to basketwork, in trade. Agriculturally the Rąmkõ'kamekra have advanced farther since their contact with civilization than the Guajajára, whose aboriginal farming was anciently far more intensive, but whose productivity has since rather diminished than grown.

241 Even today the Indians in part use their aboriginal planting stick, which is
412 invariably of very hard wood, either pau roxo or pau candeia, 75–100 cm. in length, round and flattened spade-fashion at the butt (fig. 5). Sometimes this flattened

1: Nimuendaju E-5 (1929-1936) 1946 SOS Timbira SOS

241 section is clearly set off from the round part. The Eastern Timbira term for this
412 implement, plčwapo, means "sharp, flat wood." In probing for tubers, especially for sweet potatoes, these farmers use a special pointed stick some 40 cm. in length, which is often derived from the end of a worn-out bow. These two are the only native agricultural implements that persist in contemporary use in Ponto.

242 Except for rice and bitter manioc, plants of one species rarely occupy one continuous major strip, the general practice being to dispose them in patches here and there or mixed with other crops.

243 Among Timbira cultivated plants, maize holds the place of honor, being the only
177 one whose origin is explained by a myth. Though Ribeiro mentions only two indigenous varieties,[146] the Rąmkokamekra raise four kinds of small-kerneled maize which they derive from the legendary Star maiden, Kaččkwę'i, viz. 1, põhįpéy, true or good maize, with small, white, and very soft kernels; 2, põhįyaká, white maize, somewhat larger, but otherwise similar; 3, põhįkreakáre, with small blue kernels; and 4, to'rómre, with black kernels of medium size. The large-kerneled varieties, põhįti, are additions from the Neobrazilians.

243 The appearance of the Pleiades (krot) after sunset on the western horizon is a
221 harbinger of the rainy season and indicates the need for starting a clearing in order
805 to plant at the first rainfall. This ushers in the meipimrą'k period (p. 84), roughly coterminous with the rainy season since it ends with the commencement of the maize harvest.

243 *Horticultural rites.*—A man named Võkrãkę', whose maternal home is on the
624 east side of the village circle, is charged with ceremonially opening the planting as
796 well as the harvesting of maize. On the former occasion there figures a small gourd bowl whose edge is painted with urucú and which is filled with maize kernels. Võkrãkę' takes this container to the plaza and sets it on the ground, where people dance around it. Then he takes the bowl to his wife's plot and plants the maize, whereupon others are free to follow his example. After this functionary's death his office descends to the matrilineal kinsman to whom he has transferred his name.

243 When the maize stands about 1 m. high, another ceremony is held in order to
782 induce the Moon, Pųduvrį, to ward off noxious animal parasites from the plants.
796 Clapping together their hands and singing "Pųduvrįre kayẽ'yẽ' rivahá vaká mopó tu krére," all the villagers of both sexes then slowly dance in the plaza on a full-moon night, moving from the north southward under the leadership of a precentor wielding his rattle. In the rainy season they fear a lunar eclipse even far more than during the dry period, for they think it would destroy the crops. The relevant ceremonies will be described later.

776 In case of drought, however, not the Moon, but the Sun, Pųt, is addressed. Three
782 old men then march round the boulevard, singing "kedeti,/imąpéy/vayakrį' (Grandfather [=sun],/be good to me and/gladden me [by rain])."

No one—not even the woman owning the plot—is free to eat of the crop until
796 the councilors have tasted of it and declared it mature. The maize harvest is opened
624 by the same man, Võkrãkę', who inaugurated the planting season. First, a hunting
243 party leaves to secure meat for the village. When they return with game, Võkrãkę' asks his wife to fetch from the plots a carrying basket full of maize ears, which are husked and cooked into meat pies to be served to the councilors in the plaza. Of the husks Võkrãkę' makes some twenty shuttlecocks, which his son Rąrą'k takes to the plaza and throws, one by one, into the circle of players. These throw each ball toward one another with the palm of the hand as long as possible without per-

[146] Memoria, § 11.

1: Nimuendajú E-5 (1929-1936) 1946 SOS Timbira SOS

841 853 171 about frequently married eight-year-old girls, refers not to the Timbira, but to the Southern Kayapó.

How the native theory of defloration as prerequisite to menstruation could persist is a complete enigma; and its occurrence in identical form among Eastern and Western Timbira proves that the idea is not an innovation. I myself took cognizance of its existence relatively late. An accurate determination of the facts encounters difficulty, not because of Indian prudery, but because the natives could never grasp that I was interested solely in the objective facts: they always supposed [123] that I was taking a personal interest in the girl I asked about. That I was inquiring about two or three girls was also intelligible, though my simultaneously concerning myself with all of them seemed a bit odd. I left the puzzle unsolved.

881 841 585 No special measures are taken at puberty, the procedure remaining uniform for the first and for subsequent menstrual periods. Since defloration and menstruation are equated, the diet is the same in both cases, but in the former it extends to both spouses, who for several days abstain from heavy dishes lest their hair turn gray prematurely. Meat, manioc paste, and manioc flour are taboo, while nowadays rice is reckoned most suitable.

841 Formerly a menstruating female is said to have worn a hip cord of burity bast dyed red, a badge that had completely fallen into desuetude at the time of my stay. She goes bathing as usual, but wears no decoration and does not appear in the plaza, least of all for dancing. In fact, she does not without necessity leave the house, where she is seated on a special mat of paty palm leaves. She must, above all, refrain from looking at the plantation in order not to injure the growth of the crops. She drinks from a special water bottle, but may prepare food for others [412] as well as herself. The use of a scratching-stick is prescribed. It is usually a span in length and consists of a rod of paty leafstalk or any handy little stick as a substitute; the scratcher is usually stuck into the thatch of the wall beside the bed.

No man knowingly has relations with a menstruating woman lest he be afflicted [757] with a headache so violent as to drive him mad. If he recognizes the woman's condition too late, he immediately prepares an infusion of cedar bark, sets it outdoors overnight, and drinks it the next morning.

836 627 596 Though premarital defloration has become the rule as it were, the girl's relatives still demand an indemnity unless marriage follows. Usually there is a family council, embracing the mother, her brothers and sisters, the girl's elder brother if old enough, and the paternal aunt. After a cross-questioning of the girl in order to ascertain the facts, the mother's brother betakes himself to the culprit's family and with the utmost calm and prolixity propounds the claim for indemnification. He rarely receives an immediate reply, for the Timbira are generally extremely slow in reaching a decision. There ensues a discussion by the culprit's family, possibly repeated at intervals of weeks, so that the affair is drawn out over months, sometimes dying of inanition—if for no other reason, because in the meantime the girl has had over-ample time to dispose of her person. In some cases, however, the uncle takes a more determined stand and lays siege to the opposing party till they indemnify the others with a gun or such ironware as a pot, a bush-knife, or an ax, the maternal uncle receiving the lion's share. This, at least, is the contemporary procedure. Anciently, it is said (and confirmed by Pohl), premarital defloration was virtually nonexistent.

833 171 Like the Apinayé and the Šerénte, the Rąmkõ'kamekra cohabit both in dorsal and in semilateral feminine position; in the latter case, posteriorly below the woman's raised thigh.